

X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3 X	4

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Item 41 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR determined that the State has implemented standards that are reasonably in accord with national standards.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has standardized licensing regulations for foster, kinship, and adoptive homes. The licensing process also includes specialized training for kinship caregivers and foster and adoptive parents. According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster and adoptive parents in Missouri must undergo an approval process that includes a State criminal background check, a child abuse/neglect registry check, assessment of the physical health of the family, and fire and safety inspections. The home study assessment requires 4 in-home consultations and approximately 10 hours of interviews with all household members. Any licensed home, whether kinship or foster home for an unrelated child, must meet the same licensing requirements. Homes are licensed for a 24-month period.

The Statewide Assessment notes that CD also provides regulatory oversight for licensing Residential Child Caring agencies and Child Placing agencies. Re-licensure occurs every 2 years for residential/child-placing agencies. There is a sufficient number of staff to monitor licensed facility homes.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR affirmed that effective standards are in place for foster/adoptive homes and child-placing agencies. Stakeholders reported that licensing and re-licensing occurs in a timely manner.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

☒ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 42 is rated as a Strength because CFSR findings indicate that licensing standards are applied to all foster family homes and child-care institutions receiving IV-E or IV-B funds.

According to the Statewide Assessment, licensing standards are applied equally to all foster and relative caregiver homes. This includes training, assessment, home safety standards, and meeting the five required competencies. Adoptive families must meet all of the foster home requirements and complete additional adoption training and assessment. Rules pertaining to Residential Child Caring agencies and Child Placing agencies are applied equally to all licensed residential facilities. Agencies may request a variance of a particular rule, if needed, during a specific licensure period.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue for the onsite CFSR indicated that the standards are applied equally to licensed foster families and relative homes. Jasper County stakeholders, however, indicated that relative homes are not held to the same standards as foster homes regarding safety, cleanliness, and size limitations.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

☒ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 43 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR determined that the State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background checks.

According to the Statewide Assessment, State regulations and agency policy require criminal background checks and child abuse/neglect background checks for (1) foster and adoptive parents, and (2) staff of Residential and Child Placing agencies. Criminal record checks of all household members age 18 and older are conducted during the licensing and re-licensing process.

As noted in the Statewide Assessment, the criminal records held by the Missouri Highway Patrol are not sent to the local office in a timely manner, and at times, the records contain incomplete information. Another concern is that the Highway Patrol does not maintain records related to civil matters, such as Orders of Protection. There is currently no statewide system available that agency staff can access to obtain information about restraining orders. The agency is in the process of implementing State and FBI fingerprint checks, which is expected to improve the efficiency of the clearance process and to provide fuller information about individuals considered as placement resources.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR were in general agreement that criminal background checks and child abuse and neglect registry checks are completed for foster/adoptive and relative placements. They noted that background checks are conducted during both the licensing and re-licensing process, although it can take up to 8 weeks to receive the results of a background check.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Item 44 is rated as an Area Needing Improvement because CFSR findings indicate that the State does not have a statewide recruitment plan and recruitment activities are not conducted year-round.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has a number of ongoing efforts to recruit foster and adoptive families to match the diversity of children in State care and custody. The agency contracts with private agencies to conduct foster and adoptive recruitment, training, and assessments. These contracts specifically target placement resources for African American and special needs children. Placements for African American children are also the focus of the “One Church, One Child” program, which operates in three sites across the State, and the “Family-to-Family” project in St. Louis.

The Statewide Assessment notes that statewide efforts include the development of culturally-appropriate recruitment, retention, and support strategies through the Adoption Exchange, distribution of new recruitment brochures, and expansion of media recruitment (i.e., television and radio segments, billboards, and child-specific efforts).

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the CD has a number of effective, local recruitment efforts in place to recruit/retain foster homes that reflect the ethnic diversity of the foster care population, and noted the success of the “One Church, One Child” project and targeted recruitment activities in Jackson and St. Louis Counties. However, State-level stakeholders expressed concern that due to limited funds, targeted recruitment efforts do not occur on a year-round basis and do not occur in all jurisdictions. Stakeholders reported that metropolitan areas have more funding for recruitment than do rural areas. This was reflected in the concerns expressed by Jasper County stakeholders about the agency’s ability to successfully recruit and retain foster families. Stakeholders also indicated that the Jasper County Court imposes a barrier on child-specific, adoptive recruitment by not allowing photo-listings of children. In addition, stakeholders indicated that some foster homes are underutilized, and that a significant number of licensed families do not have children placed with them.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

☒ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 45 is rated as a Strength because the State effectively uses cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely placements for waiting children.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri employs a number of approaches to facilitate cross-jurisdictional placements. The State uses the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) and the Adoption Exchange. Many children available for adoption are placed on Missouri's state photo-listing Internet site and also on the national adoption web site. A "Second Level Matching Team," composed of representatives from around the State, meets every two months to "match" children and prospective adoptive families from Missouri and other states. The Statewide Assessment notes that delays in processing ICPCs, problems in finalizing adoption subsidies, and a lack of financial incentives for placement of children with special needs are barriers to the use of cross-jurisdictional resources.

Stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR noted that CD uses multiple resources to achieve adoptive placements, such as the ICPC and State and national registries. However, stakeholders reported delays in ICPC processing that impact timely adoptions. They also reported it is difficult to place children with high medical needs due to differences in Medicaid guidelines across States.